

# BULGARIAN FOLKSONGS

CHOSEN AND TRANSLATED  
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*The Bulgarian Folksong is no fossil — a living growth. It reflects, along with fragments of past history and extinct religions the everyday life of thousands of villages. Nor are the oldest versions of the songs always the best; they may be longer and none the better for that. While some die out, others take their place; the new ones tell us, not of kings and heroes, but of a workaday world, good luck and bad, love, quarrels and death in such an intimate way, sometimes humourous, sometimes tender but always terse and vivid, that only the folklorist has time to regret King Marko and his inordinate draughts of wine or Gruitsa and the other four children who at the age of three fight and defeat all comers.*

*The following translations keep as faithfully, not to say as baldly, as possible to the originals. There are no rimes, so that one great difficulty of translators is avoided. The common speech is used so that ornamental archaisms of the youth and maiden type are out of place. Nothing has been added and if there is any shortening beyond that of some exuberant verbal repetitions it is because English is shorter than Bulgarian. The rhythm of the originals is kept, with this proviso, that whereas it is very free and various, the translation based on the prevailing rhythm, tries to keep to it, lest it offend English ears.*

*One of the most striking characteristics of the Bulgarian Folksong we cannot render here — its tune, wild*



and mournful, in a scale neither pure minor nor major but partaking of both. Its time too is strange;  $5/4$  and  $7/4$  are usual, and irregular measures much commoner than in Western Europe. The tunes are short, with many repeats. Simple major and minor tunes in jogtrot rhythms may also be heard but are not frequent or characteristic.

The following songs have been chosen as representing main types, beginning with the ballads. These, even more frequently than our own, have to do with supernatural creatures, *samovili* forest fairies (p. 13), *rous-salki* water nixes, and dragons (p. 11, 13). This is only natural for they continue to be real to the uneducated, who in casual conversation will tell you „My godmother's daughter did not wish to be married because a dragon fell in love with her; but her mother insisted and on the third night of the wedding she was found strangled.“ Or „My neighbour's wife was in love with a dragon: in *mufti* he looked very well and he used to do her shopping for her.“ The dragon behaves in many ways like other people, he speaks, rides horses, fetches wood for the fire. Yet we hear of his scales, his wings, his flames and of how he crawls on his belly. Perhaps he changes his shape.

The Plague (p. 21) is a real figure like a woman, dark and dreadful with tangled hair. The Sun (p. 22) must have been one of the chief gods of the Bulgarians in old times, so many songs about him and his doings with mortals remain. His horses play an important part, so does his mother.

Many are the legends of saints such as the Christmas



carol on p. 23. They are sung by waits from house to house on the day of the appropriate saint.

On p. 24 is the only representative of the great cycle of Marko Kralivitch for which room could be found.

On pp. 31—37 are songs of the *haiduti* or insurgents, both awkward words to deal with in metre; „Robber“ and „Brigand“ though unfair to these largely political outlaws are more intelligible than the one and more euphonious than the other.

From p. 37 on we have to do with personifications, which in Bulgaria are carried much further than in Western Europe. Not only does the Nightingale constantly speak in love songs and the Horse (p. 38), the Ram (p. 39), Frog (p. 39) Crayfish (p. 40) and Fox (p. 41) talk. We are used to that in stories and to some extent in songs; but here plants quarrel (p. 42) or congratulate each other (p. 42). Sun, Moon and Stars converse (p. 43). Mountains complain (p. 44) or excuse themselves (p. 45.) Rivers (p. 45) and even a nameless stream in the Rhodopes (p. 47) are also living characters with personalities.

The remaining songs are of everyday life, of gay and irresponsible youth (pp. 47—52) of love and marriage (pp. 52—65). Then come a number about the Family, for in Bulgaria family ties are unusually strong. They begin with the poignant lament for a son (p. 65). Mother and child appear in a natural but unamiable relationship on p. 66; mother and daughter quarrelling but much attached (p. 67). How different is the daughter-in-law (p. 68)! this relationship in the songs is never very cordial, but very tender throughout them all is that of brother and sister (p. 69). Aunts appear as help in time of difficulty (pp. 70—71).



Then begin the songs treating of occupations: shepherding (pp. 71—72), farming (pp. 73—75). Tailoring (p. 76) was one of the migrant trades along with building and gardening. The builders of Trun and other poor districts leave home in April working in groups all summer and return when the frost stops their work. So do the gardeners who grow vegetables as far afield as Dresden and Odessa. The shepherds too migrate to warmer pastures in Winter after a Summer on the heights.

On the professions follow the relaxations, *se di anki* (p. 78) parties on Autumn evenings when all gather round a bonfire to clean maize cobs or do other work while songs are sung and stories told.

Flowers and gardening (pp. 79—84) amount to a passion especially among the women. Drawn from the life is a Lazar carol

(Sbornik IV 15)

*Stoyanchitsa, Stoyanchitsa*  
Where did you get the flower from?  
„They sent it me from Tsarigrad (Constantinople)  
That I might plant it out and sing  
'Grow little flower, grow up grow tall  
Until the feast of Lazarus  
On Lazar's Day I'll gather you  
And fasten you upon my head  
And all the girls will want to know  
Where 'twas I got the flower from'."



*So no wonder the girl (p. 80) is vexed with her lover who must have passed through Constantinople and yet brought nothing for her garden.*

*The two relaxations of the Bulgarian peasant woman, laborious ones too and the better loved for that labour, are her flowergarden and her embroideries. These two loves she combines by working beautiful patterns of lilies, roses, iris, carnations and hollyhocks, apples and pomegranates, in gorgeous, unnaturalistic colours on the sleeves and bottom of her shirt, on her apron and household linen. How elaborate these embroideries are is shewn (with some exaggeration) on p. 84.*

*At the end we have fanciful poems (pp. 86—88) representative of quite a large class in which fancy is allowed to skip in a bewildering way — as the French have it „from a cock to a donkey“. But how gracefully it is done.*

*Bulgarian collections often classify songs less by subject than by the occasion on which they are sung. Carols are sung chiefly at Christmas, in the early Spring at St Lazarus and Blagovets, at Easter and on St George's Day (May 6th). For each occasion there are many, for they have to be suited to the person to whom they are sung. In this collection is a Christmas carol for the mother of a family (p. 23), Lazarus carols, (pp. 65 and 76), the former for a married Turk, the latter for a tailor.*

*On p. 71 is a song to be sung in Lent, when dancing is not allowed and a more sedate form of amusement takes its place on Sunday afternoons. There are Dancing Songs (e.g. p. 48) plenty of Reaper's Songs (e.g. p. 75), many and various Wedding Songs for all stages of that*



*long and complicated ceremony (the second on p. 85, p. 87, p. 77) others for Christenings, dinners and all sorts of occasions.*

*It is interesting to notice the cases of kinship between English and Bulgarian Ballads. Ours on p. 15 corresponds to the Suffolk Miracle (Child's Ballads No 272), p. 26 to Willie's Lykewake (ib. 25) and p. 51 allowing for completely different local colour to Willie of Winsbury (ib. 100). p. 19 is akin to a Scotch ballad of which I can only recall a scrap: —*

*Twas late at e'en and the bairnies grat  
The mither under the moul's heard that  
She too takes them into her grave.*

*Sofia, 1944*

*Elizabeth Marriage Mincoff*



„Y ou marry me, mother, betroth me;  
Mother you never have asked me  
Whether I wish to be married.  
There is a dragon that loves me  
Loves me and wishes to wed me.  
This very night he is coming,  
And when he comes he brings with him  
Dragons on coalblack stallions  
She-dragons in golden coaches  
Their children in painted cradles.  
When they pass over the forest  
Down fall the trees, though no wind stirs  
When over fields they are passing  
Fires flame up without lighting  
When they come hither this evening  
The house will seem to be burning  
From each of its four corners,  
But do not let it afright you!“  
Just as she finished speaking  
Both of them heard a gun-shot  
The boxwood gates flew open  
The yard was full of dragons  
Of she-dragons and dragons.  
Said the she-dragons to Rada  
„Rada, you pretty maiden  
Unplait your close-woven braids  
And let us plait you our fashion



Our fashion Rada, like dragons."  
When they had combed and plaited  
Back they got into the coaches  
Fast they flew over the forest  
Over the wide open country  
And on the road were five waggons  
Waggons with hay and with cornsheaves.  
Radka said to the dragon  
„Fiery flaming dragon  
Can you set light to the cornsheaves  
Both to the hay and the cornsheaves?"  
Thus spoke the dragon to Radka  
„Radka, my bonny lassie  
I can set light to the cornsheaves  
To the hay, Rada, I cannot.  
Herbs of all kinds are among it  
Melilot sweetly scented  
And the singlestemmed gentian.  
If I set light to the hay, dear  
Then you and I shall be parted."  
Radka was cunning and clever  
Lighted the hay in the waggons  
So got away from the dragon.  
Thus spoke the dragon to Rada  
„Radka, my bonny lassie  
Tell me, why do you trick me  
Cunningly asking me questions  
Thus to befool me and leave me?"

Elena. Angeloff & Arnaoudoff p. 88



In the clear blue sky a dragon hovers  
Underneath his wing a pretty maiden.  
Said the pretty maiden to the dragon  
„Dragon dear, now be a brother to me!  
Take me back for I have left my slippers!“  
„Come dont trifle with me, pretty maiden  
I've a shoemaker among my brothers  
He'll soon make you up a pair of slippers.“

Trun, Sbornik XXI 15

Stoyan was pasturing his lambs  
Up on the hill Ireen Pileen  
He lead them on and further on  
Until he reached the fairies' lake  
And he beheld three fairies there  
Naked and bathing in the lake  
And Stoyan went and took their clothes  
Their shifts, their skirts their aprons too.  
And the first begged and prayed Stoyan  
„Give me my shirt, give me my clothes  
I have no mother of my own  
No mother, but a stepmother.“  
So Stoyan gave her back her clothes.  
The second begged and prayed Stoyan  
„Give me my shirt, give me my clothes  
I am a luckless orphan maid



With no one left to care for me."  
So Stoyan gave her back her clothes.  
And the third begged and prayed Stoyan  
„Give me my shirt, give me my clothes  
I am my mother's only child."  
But Stoyan said „My pretty lass  
Nine years I've wandered on Pireen  
Looking for such an only child."  
He took the fairy home with him  
And she lived with him in his house  
Neither a short time nor a long  
Twas just a year she stayed with him  
And bore Stoyan a little son.  
And at the baby's christening feast  
The godfather said „Radka, come  
Get up and shew us how you dance  
Shew how you dance and dont be shy."  
And Radka answered „Godfather  
Ask him to give me back my clothes  
And then I'll dance and not be shy."  
As soon as she put on her dress  
She turned her right, she turned her left  
And as she stepped upon the hearth  
„Stoyan" she said „did you not know  
A fairy is no housekeeper  
A fairy cannot rear a child".  
And at the chimney out she flew  
Back to her mother and the rest.

Sbornik XXVI 254 & XII 6 № 3



There was a mother had nine sons  
Petkana was her only girl.  
Petkana was a woman grown  
And old enough to be a bride.  
A suitor sent to woo the girl.  
Nine villages away he lived  
Eight of her brothers said him nay  
And their old mother too refused  
But Lazar fain would give the girl  
And to their mother thus he spoke  
„Come let us let Petkana go,  
What if there be nine villages  
Between us and his place- the tenth  
Down in that waste Zagora land?  
Zagora folk are very rich.  
We're a united family,  
Even if we go but once a year  
To visit her in her new home  
It will be nine she has as guests  
Petkana will get sick of us  
Sick of us all and very tired.“  
And so Petkana married him.  
And scarcely was Petkana wed  
A dark mist fell upon the land  
And with the mist a fearful plague.  
All of those friendly brothers died  
And their nine wives at the same time  
Petkana's mother, left alone  
To rock nine cradles in her house



And tend nine luckless little babes  
 And light the candles on nine graves,  
 Each workday and each holiday  
 Watered the graves of all of them  
 Gave charity for their souls' sake.  
 And still her heart was sore for her  
 Petkana, for her only girl.  
 To Lazar's grave she would not go  
 Nor light the candles on his grave  
 Nor pour the wine upon the earth  
 And thus she cursed him in her grief  
 „Lazar! The grave give you no rest!  
 May you fall through it for your deed  
 Sending Petkana far from me  
 Down in that waste Zagora land  
 Nine villages away from us.“  
 Lazar the dead man prayed to God  
 „Help me O God! Make of my cross  
 A yellow wooden drinking flask\*  
 And of my shroud a good strong horse.“  
 And God in pity heard his prayer  
 Made of his shroud a good strong horse  
 And of his cross a drinking flask,  
 So Lazar rose up from his grave  
 And to Petkana's house he went  
 And in the doorway loudly called  
 „Petkana, sister, quick! come out!“  
 Petkana at the call came out

A flattish wooden bottle of wine with a strap by which to  
 carry it is brought when inviting guests. See also p. 24.



And when she saw him standing there  
She kissed his hand and said to him  
„Dear brother, brother Lazarus  
What is it makes your hand so smell  
„Of scalded elder and red earth?“  
And Lazar said „Petkana dear  
Are there not nine of us at home?  
We all have built a house for each  
And that is why my hand still smells  
Of scalded elder and red earth.  
Petkana come along with me  
And I will take you visiting.“  
And so Petkana started out  
Behind her brother Lazarus  
With him to go avisiting.  
They rode and rode and on they rode  
Past the green wood to the wide plain  
And in the plain there stood a tree  
And on the tree there sang a bird  
And as it sang these words it said  
„Where was it ever seen or heard  
That quick and dead together ride  
As Lazar and Petkana do?“  
Petkana said to Lazarus  
„Do you hear, brother Lazarus  
What the bird sings in yonder tree?“  
Lazarus answered her again  
„Come sister we must hurry on  
The bird is but a lying bird.“  
They rode and rode and on they rode



Until they reached their hayfields and  
Petkana said to Lazarus  
„See brother, brother Lazarus  
The hay in all the fields is cut  
Only in yours it stands unmown  
And Lazar answered her again  
„I have been ill and could not mow“.  
When to the vineyards they came on  
Petkana said to Lazarus  
„See, all the vineyards have been dug  
And only yours is left to do.“  
Lazarus answered her again  
„I have been ill and could not dig.“  
They rode and rode and on they rode  
Until they reached the churchyard wall  
And to Petkana Lazar said  
„Petkana dear, go straight on home  
And I will follow after you  
When I have given my horse to drink  
I shall o’ertake you very soon“.  
Then he drew off his wedding ring  
And to Petkana handed it  
„If mother asks you, sister dear  
Who came with you upon the road  
Say ‘It was brother Lazarus’,  
And should she not believe your word  
Just show to her my wedding ring.“  
Lazar returned unto his grave  
Petkana to the house went on  
And knocked upon the door and called



„Mother come out to welcome me.“  
And when her mother came outside  
And saw Petkana on the step  
She sadly, gently asked of her  
„Petkana, who has brought you here?“  
Petkana to her mother said  
„Mother, o dear old mother mine  
My brother Lazar brought me here  
And if my word you dont believe  
See he has given me his ring  
His wedding ring to show to you  
And here it is, o mother mine.“  
Then sore at heart the mother was  
She caught Petkana in her arms  
And in her daughter's arms she wept.  
Alive they locked in their embrace  
And dead they fell apart again.

Angeloff & Arnaoudoff p. 101

**L**azar was pasturing the steers  
About the graves of 'Rusalem  
And there he climbed upon a stone  
And played upon his shepherd's pipe  
And from the grave the young wife heard  
And from the grave she spoke to him  
„Dear brother, tell me is he wed?  
Has he led home another wife



And is she prettier than I,  
More saving, more industrious?"  
And Lazar answered „He has wed  
And brought us home another bride  
And she is prettier than you  
More saving, more industrious,  
But she neglects the little ones.  
Early at dawn she leaves the house  
And comes again at sunset time.  
The children come to meet her then  
And one will want a bit of bread  
And one a drink, but she will scold  
'Sweet children: never satisfied.  
Always more food, always more drink:  
That's how you wore your mother out."  
„Dear brother, I must beg of you  
To lead the children here to me  
And bring the smallest in your arms."  
And Lazar did as she had bid  
And went and fetched the elder child  
And brought the younger in his arms  
And the grave opened, swallowed them.

Koprivchitsa, Sbornik XVI—XVII 94



Listen what happened a while back  
In the great village of Kotel  
Out at the bleachingground everyone  
Spread out their linen for bleaching.  
Poor little Stanka the orphan  
She too was bleaching her linen  
When the black Plague came and scared them.  
All of them snatched up their linen  
Ran to their homes in a hurry.  
Stanka the poor little orphan  
She too snatched up her linen  
Ran towards the Plague calling loudly  
„Plague, o black Plague, please take me first  
I am a poor little orphan  
No one is left of my people  
O Plague, neither father nor mother.“  
But the Plague answered poor Stanka.  
„Stanka you poor little orphan  
Wait while I look in my notebook  
See if your name is inside it.“  
When she had looked in the notebook  
„Stanka“ she said „little orphan  
You are not down in the notebook  
cannot possibly take you.“  
So she passed on through the village.

Northern Dobrudja, Sbornik XXXV 112



Late last evening at the fountain  
To the lads and to the lasses  
Boasted thus the young girl's mother:  
„I've a little girl, so pretty  
Brighter than the sun her beauty.“  
And the sun heard and he answered  
„Come bring out your little daughter  
Bring her here, we'll make a wager  
And we'll stake great stakes upon it  
We will shine, the two together.  
If the little girl shines brighter  
Let her take my fine horse from me,  
But if I should shine the brighter  
I will take your little daughter.“  
They set out to shine together  
And they shone against each other  
And the sun shone on the whole world  
On the world and on the mountains  
But the little lassie could not  
And her face turned white as snowdrifts  
Like the drifts along the hedgerows  
For the glorious sun outshone her.

Razgrad, Boncheff no 118



Once a troupe of young men started  
Started singing Christmas carols  
On the way they met God's Mother  
And she summoned them to table  
And she said „Come eat and drink, waits.  
When you rise you'll sing a new song  
Sing a new song, Christmas carol  
While the woods and waters listen  
And the songbirds in the forest  
And the fishes in the water.“  
So the waits sat down and feasted  
Ate and drank, when they had risen  
Sang a new song, Christmas carol  
Woods and waters both kept silence  
And the songbirds in the forest  
And the fishes in the water  
While they listened to the singing  
Of the new song, Christmas carol.  
But one tree would not keep silent  
Twas the aspen, and God's Mother  
Cursed it saying „O thou aspen  
Dost not listen to the singing  
Of the new song, Christmas carol,  
And from now henceforth for ever  
Thou shalt tremble when the wind blows  
Tremble too when all is quiet.“  
That is why the aspen trembles  
With the wind and in the stillness.

Varna, Sbornik VIII 24



Marco one day said to his wife  
„Why are you not so pretty now  
As the first year that we were wed,  
The first year and the second year?“  
„Dear Marco, what do you expect  
With all the work I have to do  
So many people on the farm  
The shepherds and the goatherds too  
The cowmen, wanting flour and food.  
That's why I have grown plain my dear  
With the hard work I have to do  
And if I do not please you dear  
Just take another wife as well  
Another wife, a prettier  
Together we will share the work.“  
Daphina spoke the words in jest  
But Marco took them seriously.  
Into the storehouses he went  
And took there wooden flasks for wine\*  
Filled them and sent them straight away  
To Lovetch to the Bishop there  
To Pleven to his godfather  
To pretty Ielka at Sofia  
To bid them to the wedding feast.  
So a great wedding was prepared  
And many went to meet the bride.  
Daphina in the garden sat  
Bitterly weeping mid the flowers  
„Dear little sisters, flowers“ she said



„All sown and still not planted out  
Your sister had no time for you.“  
But Marco's mother said to her  
„Pretty Daphina come and wash  
And plait your hair and do it well  
And change into your wedding dress  
And put your prettiest trinkets on  
For we must meet the wedding guests.  
And when they come, go greet them well  
That everybody may be pleased  
And lead their horses to the stall  
And kiss the hands of all the guests  
And Marco's and his bride's as well.“  
Daphina did as she was told  
And Ielka said „O Marco dear  
Who is the pretty bride I see?  
Your sister or your brother's wife  
Or cousin that she is so pleased?“  
And Marco answered Ielka „No  
Daphina 'tis, whom I divorce.“  
And Ielka said „O Marco dear  
How beautiful Daphina is  
Yet she no longer pleases you  
And how can I expect to please?  
I too shall not be good enough  
And you'll divorce me in my turn.“  
And turning to the wedding guests  
„Godfathers, groomsmen all“ she said  
„Tis time to stop this wedding feast  
You'd better take me back again



To where it was we started from.  
Daphina was not good enough  
And how am I to set about  
To please a man like Marco here?"

\* See note p. 16.

Teteven, Sbornik XXXI 213

Demo, Demo, wild young Demo  
Fell in love with our Elena  
Our Elena, the priest's daughter.  
Three years and a half they courted  
Till her mother heard about it  
And her mother was against it  
And at once she stopped Elena  
Going with the girls to dancing  
With the young brides to the fountain  
With the boys to evening parties  
Songs and fairy tales and spinning.  
Demo then was sadly puzzled  
What to do and how to manage  
For his love to come and meet him.  
So he built a handsome fountain  
At the entrance to the village  
And the conduits were of marble  
And the pipes were made of silver  
And the mouths of them were gilded.  
Everybody went to see it



But her mother would not let her  
Said „Stay here, dont go Elena  
It is only done to tempt you  
Just to tempt you and befool you.“  
Demo wondered how to manage  
That his love should come and meet him,  
In the middle of the village  
Built a church and roofed it grandly  
Covering the walls with marble  
And the ikons were all silver  
And the lamps were silver gilded.  
Everybody went to see it  
But her mother would not let her.  
So he laid him down and died there  
And Elaine said to her mother  
„Mother, mother, dearest mother  
While alive I might not see him  
Let me go now to the funeral.“  
And her mother answered „Go now  
Take him flowers for his coffin.“  
So Elena took two candles  
And she went into the garden  
There she gathered yellow flowers  
Yellow flowers and sweet basil  
Loosed her hair down to her ankles  
Raised her voice aloud in weeping.  
To the church she went to Demo  
And she decked him and bewept him  
„Demo, Demo, wild young Demo  
While alive you might not see me



Now you see me at your funeral."  
Demo stood up calling loudly  
„All you priests and all you deacons  
Who were singing for the funeral  
Let us turn it to a wedding:  
Marry Demo and Elena."

Mustafa Pasha, Sbornik 1909 p. 55

**B**rothers three were building a castle  
Each day they built it up in the sunlight  
Each night it fell under the moonlight.  
Then the brothers took council together  
„Whichever of our wives comes first  
Early at morn bringing the breakfast  
Her we will bury in the foundations."  
Each of them warned his wife of the matter  
Only to Struna her husband said nothing  
All that he said was „Struna, oh Struna  
Early tomorrow when you get up dear  
First bathe the baby, swaddle and nurse him  
Feed him and rock him, lull him to sleep.  
Then bake the bread and wash the white linen  
After all that you will cook me my breakfast  
And bring it hither to the white castle."  
Struna arose very early next morning  
Did all the things her husband had told her



Got him his breakfast, cooked it and brought it  
When her love saw her, down bowed his head  
Down bowed his head, she saw he was crying.  
Gently spoke to him Struna his wife  
„Why my love do you hang down your head  
Why hang your head, and why are you crying?“  
„Oh Struna, Struna, my ring has fallen  
My silver ring with the red stone in it  
Fallen down here into the foundations.“  
„Dearest, Struna will leap down and find it.“  
Struna leapt down into the foundations  
Seeking the ring with the red stone in it  
Her uncles and her husband's brothers  
Stone upon stone and beam on beam building  
Walled Struna in into the foundations.  
Struna called out „O uncles, O brothers  
Leave me a place free on the right side  
On the right side in the castle foundations  
That I may nurse my little baby  
My little baby with milk that is fresh.“

Angeloff, Crestomatia p. 154.



Milka's mother boasts of her daughter  
„Never was maiden as lovely as Milka  
In Constantinople or Adrianople  
None is the like of our Turnovo beauty!“  
Now a young Latin heard of her boasting  
Hired himself carpenters wondrously skilful  
Went to the forest to choose himself timber  
Bade them cut planks of the finest pinewood  
Build a slender swiftsailing vessel.  
Merchandize bought he, trinkets for maidens  
Filagree necklets and painted distaffs  
Gold thread and silver, silk of the whitest.  
Loud called the Latin „Come buy my fairings!“  
Everyone came but beautiful Milka  
See now, she comes too, beautiful Milka  
One maid before her sweeping the pathway  
One maid behind her holding her train up  
So she came down to the swiftsailing vessel  
To buy her threads both silver and golden  
Silver and golden and silk of the whitest  
Filagree necklets and painted distaffs.  
When the young Latin saw Milka coming  
By the right hand he took her and led her  
Onto the ship, the swiftsailing vessel  
And as they sailed he said „Pretty Milka  
When grapes grow on thorns you'll return to your  
mother.“

Yankoff no 255.



Turkish soldiers are marching up  
Bearing with them a robber's head.  
„Out all of you! and have a look  
Whether you know whose head it is.“  
All of them came both great and small,  
None of them knew whose head it was;  
Then an old woman came along  
She knew the head and all too well  
And to the soldiers loud she cried  
„Curse on you that you killed my son!“  
Whereon the Turks replied to her  
„Well done old woman! Mashala! \*  
Well you knew how to rear your son.  
Before we could come up with him  
Over nine mountains must we climb,  
Before his hands were safely tied  
Nine of our ropes he burst in two,  
Before we could cut off his head  
Nine of our swords were broke and bent.  
Rear other sons as good as he!“

Samokoff, oral. \*Bravo (Turkish)



Hoarfrost fell right in the summer  
Fell for a fortnight together  
Right in the midst of the dogdays  
Fell on the woods and the water  
Fell on the grass of the meadows  
Fell on the leaves of the forest.  
In all the mountains round Sliven  
One tree alone was not blighted  
It was a laurel, an olive.  
Under the tree there were sitting  
Two hundred brigands; their leaders  
Three: — Radool, Staiko and Martin.  
Radool was piping and Staiko  
Beating the drum while the lads danced.  
Up spoke Martin, who sat watching  
„Lads! We've had no luck this summer  
All our clothes wearing to pieces  
Nothing to buy us tobacco.  
What can we do in these mountains!  
Who wants to come and earn money?  
White coins and even more yellow  
Each of us all he can carry!  
Boys, let us up and be going  
Into the Karnobat mountains.“  
And the rest answered him „Captain  
We should all like to come with you.  
How can we hope to pass Sliven  
Where all the people will know us?“  
„Boys we shall easily do it,



No one in Sliven will know us.  
Let us find one of our number  
Fit for the bride at a wedding  
With a girl's face and a man's heart  
Slim waist, black eyes and curved eyebrows,  
Then as a bridal procession  
We shall pass safely through Sliven."  
When they looked everyone over  
Radool was best for the purpose  
And they all cried out „Martini  
Radool is bride at our wedding.  
Only say how shall we dress him  
Wanting the veil and the bride's wreath?"  
„Just see whose scarf\* is the thinnest  
That as a veil it may serve us  
And as we're passing through Sliven  
We'll buy red wreaths for the bridal."  
Loud played the flutes and the bagpipes  
Rub-a-dub-dub went the drummer  
Great was the wedding procession.  
When they were coming to Sliven  
Martin said „Boys if they ask you  
What is this queer kind of wedding  
What has become of the women?  
Just tell the people of Sliven  
'What with the Turks and the brigands  
Travelling is really too risky  
For us men, let alone women'.  
So then they marched into Sliven  
Bought the wreath, decked the bride with it.



Nobody knew them in Sliven;  
Even in passing the konak  
Though it was crowded with soldiers  
Nobody there would have known them  
But at the gate of the konak  
Sat a black rogue of a negro,  
He went and said to the Pasha  
„This is no wedding procession!  
Brigands they are from the Balkan  
Come from the mountains round Sliven.“  
Then to his men said the Pasha  
„Go, stop the wedding procession!  
Bring me the bride.“ So they brought them  
But the bride made no obeisance.  
Whereon the Pasha grew angry  
„Well if your bride has no manners  
Maybe your wheat can bow for her.“\*\*  
And Martin answered the Pasha  
„To us the bride makes obeisance  
To a Turk'tis not permitted.“  
Then in a fury the Pasha  
Called „Fetch the keys of the prison  
Lock them all into the dungeon.“  
This time Radool lost his temper  
Drew out his sword from his furcoat  
Slew the guard, dashed to the courtyard  
Thrust his sword out to the left side  
When he had turned to the right side  
All of the soldiers had fallen  
And from above called the Pasha



„Quick! Let the gates be thrown open!  
The bride had better be going!“

1872, Sbornik XXVI 36.

\* Scarf, the long kummerbund round a man's waist.

\*\* A threat to trample down the crops.

„Donka go ask of your mother  
If I may have you in marriage  
Although I be a comita.“\*  
„Hark to the wild, foolish fellow!  
Comitas do not have houses,  
Comitas dont bring up children;  
The mountain's the house of the brigand  
His wife is a slim Russian rifle  
His cartridges, they are his children.“

Prilep, Sbornik XV 54.

\* A brigand, derived from „Committee“!

Autumn is come and the hoarfrost is falling  
Hoarfrost is falling, the leaves seared and withered  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

All the leaves are seared in the forest  
Seared and fallen, leaving the trees bare  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.



Long enough we've marched hither and thither  
Hither and thither through the green forest  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

Long enough we've been eating and drinking  
Fat lambs, red wine and fiery brandy  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

Long enough we have carried our rifles  
Rifles and swords and braces of pistols  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

Through the forest our fathers are going  
Through the forest asking for news of us  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

From house to house our mothers are going  
Through the village asking for news of us  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

To the sedianki\* our sisters are going  
To the sedianki asking for news of us  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

Round the village our children wander  
Naked and barefoot, they too are calling  
Furl the flag captain, let us be going.

Gabrovo 1872. Sbornik XXVI 46.

\* Evening working parties.



Tell me, tell me robber chieftain  
Tell me: Shall I cut your hand off?  
Your robber's hand?

„Cut it, cut it Sergeant major  
Since it could not hold the gun straight.“

The troup's dispersed.  
Tell me, tell me robber chieftain  
Tell me shall I put your eyes out?  
Your coalblack eyes?

„Take them, take them Sergeant major  
Since they did not see to aim straight.“  
The troup's dispersed.

Tell me, tell me robber chieftain  
Tell me shall I cut your head off  
Your robber's head?  
„Cut it off O Sergeant major  
Since it lacked the wit to rout you.“  
The troup's dispersed.

Akhur Chelebisko, Sbornik II 137.

Stancho to Stanka said one day  
„Stanka, you pretty slender girl  
My pretty one, my little bride  
Go in your little garden, dear,  
Pick me a nosegay of your flowers  
Sweet basil, darkeyed marigold



And double yellow hollyhock."  
And as she picked, up spoke his horse  
„Stop pretty Stanka! pick no flowers  
Dont give him any nosegay pray.  
We came here through nine villages  
We met nine girls upon the road  
With all the nine we fell in love  
And you will be the tenth , my girl."  
Stanka grew vexed and 'stead of flowers  
Threw nettles out across the hedge  
And into Stancho's shirt they fell  
And burnt his chest, and Stancho said  
„My little horse, just you look out  
Next time we go a-marketing!  
For I shall load you up old boy  
With sixty okas\* of white rice  
And mount you on the top of that  
Then I shall ask you how you like  
The load you feel upon your back  
Whether it weighs upon your back  
As the girl weighs upon my heart."

Elena, Sbornik XXVII 286.

\* Old fashioned weight =  $1\frac{1}{4}$  kilos.



**T**he ram with the horns O so sadly is bleating  
„O dear, O dear! I take God to my witness  
All of the time till the shepherd was married  
I cropped the grass on the high mountain pasture  
Lay in the shadow under the ashtrees  
Drinking the water straight from the sources  
Licking the salt that was put for me ready.  
But woe's the day! Since the shepherd is married  
I must find pasture among the rubbish  
Drinking the water out of the puddles  
Taking the salt wherever I find it.“

Deber, Ikonomoff no 36.

**T**ortoise went one day a-ploughing  
Started with a mouse to lead him  
And a frog to do the driving.  
So they went along the highway  
Till they came upon a hedgehog.  
Out he stuck his spines, the creature,  
And ripped up the frog's blue tunic.  
Lady Frog was very angry,  
Went at once before the Cadi,  
Said „O Cadi, O Effendi  
You sit crooked, but judge straightly!  
I was walking on the highway  
On my way to do the ploughing



With a mouse to do the leading.  
On the road I met a hedgehog.  
Out went all the spines upon him  
And he tore my new blue tunic."  
Said the Judge „Egad Miss Froggy!  
You're a girl, stay home in safety;  
He's a boy, that's why he does so."

Samokoff, Shapkareff I 1217.

**M**other Crayfish went upon a journey  
Seeking someone for her son to marry  
Seeking him a bride down in the valley.  
Hindmost, foremost, wandered Mother Crayfish  
Till among the croaking frogs one pleased her,  
Yellow legged she was and creamy breasted.  
She refused the crayfish and his whiskers.  
„How could I sew drawers to fit the bridegroom?  
Twelve legs to the pair is far too many."

Gorna Orechovitza, Sbornik XXVI 380.

\* Among the many wedding gifts the bride has to prepare  
is underlinen for the groom.



Mrs Fox was left a widow  
With twelve cubs, six male, six female.  
One day she sat down to comb them  
As she combed them she was crying  
„O what will become of you dears  
And how can your mother rear you?“  
But the smallest fox cub answered  
She the smallest and the cleverest  
„We'll go to Constantinople  
To Constantinople market  
Round the necks of wealthy people  
On the purses of poor people.“

Turnovo, Sbornik X 107

Get up all you hens! Begin dancing  
For today is the old rooster's wedding,  
We shall find him an old hen to marry.  
But the rooster has quite lost his temper  
Says he wont take the old hen we offer  
He is set upon marrying a pullet.

Deber, Shapkareff no 1240.



**C**alled aloud the green and early basil  
 „Health to lads I wish, and health to lasses  
 Let them come and pick me green and growing.“  
 And the meadow cranesbill heard him speaking  
 „How you talk you green and early basil!  
 Just a month or two you keep your greenness  
 Autumn comes, the hoarfrost sears your beauty.  
 I keep green in winter and in summer  
 In the winter under the white snowdrifts  
 In the summer in the shady places.“  
 Answered him the green and early basil  
 „You are green in winter and in summer  
 Just a month or two I keep my greenness  
 But without me who can go to church, pray?  
 And without me not a bride is married  
 And without me not a child is christened.“

Yankoff 182.

„Much health“ is the usual salutation answering to „kind regards to“. Basil is used for sprinkling holy water; cranesbill is planted in every garden for the sake of its green leaves and aromatic scent, and is called zdravets = health. Perhaps it is this usurpation of his own personal name that stings the cranesbill to retort.

**F**rom the meadow cried the Autumn crocus  
 Till they heard him in the next field plainly  
 „I congratulate you, clever iris:  
 For your mother reared you very wisely  
 In the Spring she taught you how to blossom



For the girls and brides to pluck and wear you  
But poor me! I grew up so neglected  
No one but a stepmother to rear me  
And she taught me how to flower in Autumn  
For the horses with their hooves to pick me  
For the pigs to root me out with gruntings  
For the hoar frost and the cold to wither."

Trun, Sbornik XXII 38.

**R**ada and Stoyan were lovers  
For a year and more in secret  
And they said to one another  
„No one knows a thing about it."  
And the sun arranged the business  
Twas the moon that spoiled the matter  
And she said to Stoyan „Stoyan  
You're in love, you silly fellow  
You're in love and lying about it  
But how are you to get married?  
For you are such near relations  
Near relations, second cousins.  
Can you really think, Stoyanë  
No one knows a thing about it?  
In the forest all the leaves know  
In the meadow all the grass knows  
By the sea the very sand knows  
And the stars know in the heavens."

Yankoff no 92.



Stara Planina is bitterly weeping  
Pirin Planina asked her politely  
„Why are you crying Stara Planina?“  
„How can I help it Pirin Planina?“  
Not a year passes but there come brigands  
(This year they're far more) and the young shepherds  
With their grey flocks come eating my grass up  
Drinking my water, roasting their black lambs  
Burning my tall trees in the green forest.  
Broad is the leafage, thick is the shadow  
And in the shadow cool is the water,  
Perched on the branches nightingales singing  
As they are singing they keep on saying  
„Plague take the brigands, plague take the shepherds  
They've burned the forest, the dark green forest  
Trees, they stood high once, leaves spread so broadly  
Now we no longer can sing our carols.“

Akhur Chelebisko, Sbornik III 78.

Stoyan sat alone in the tavern  
Drinking red wine and while drinking  
Turning his eyes to the mountain  
Thus to the mountain broke silence.  
„Mountain oh Murgash mountain  
Fair art thou Murgash and goodly  
For flocks, for passing the winter,  
Best of all art thou for pasture.



Why dost thou do me this damage?  
Not a year passes oh Murgash  
But you take one of my shepherds  
And this year two you have taken  
Two of them, flute players\* both."  
Murgash always is silent  
Says not a word to any  
Yet to Stoyan he answered  
„Stoyan, oh man of mettle  
I do not take your shepherds  
But on my heights there are skrees  
Skrees and blue stones upon them  
Among the stones lives the viper  
She it is takes thy shepherds  
Them and their flutes together."

Angeloff p. 153.

\* The Kaval is really more like recorder or flageolet, a thick wooden pipe blown vertically.

Three sisters ran for a wager  
Three sisters who were three rivers  
Arda Maritsa and Toondja  
Three days they ran, three nights also  
And they said one to another  
„Come, let us halt here and rest us  
Lie down and sleep for a little  
And the first sister who wakens



Will call the others for starting  
So that we all start together  
Then we shall see who is victor."  
So they lay down for a little  
Rested and slept, but the Toondja  
(She was the youngest) waked early  
And did not wake up the others  
But started off on her journey  
And when the Arda awakened  
„Sister“ she said to Maritsa  
„Get up, for Toondja has started.“  
Maritsa said „Sister Arda  
May the Lord cause sister Toondja  
To flow with noise and with gurglings  
Tearing the forests and mountains  
Smoothing the road for us ready  
For us who coming behind her  
Will overtake her and pass her.“  
God heard the prayer, it was granted  
And from that day forth the Toondja  
Flows with a noise and with gurgling  
Making a path for her sisters:  
They overtake her and pass her.

Sliven, Karaveloff Transactions no 9.



Water so cool and like cristal  
Something I'm going to ask you  
Something I want you to tell me  
What is it pleases you best- say?  
„O Bey, the blackeyed girls please me  
When with their white hands they lift me  
Carry me on their slim shoulders  
Take me home with them and warm me  
That I may wash their bright trousers  
When they have got a bit dirty  
In the long nights of the Winter  
In the long days of the Summer.“

Akhur Chelebisko, Sbornik V 33.

Note how the Pomak song retains the Turkish courtesy title and alludes to the baggy trousers of the Mohammedan women; the Pomaks, a pure Bulgarian race in the Rhodope Mts have for centuries been Mohammedan.

From the spring, my lass, the water gushes  
And the young girl comes to fill her buckets  
Sees herself reflected in the water  
Says to it „O water, O clear water  
See how red and white I am, O water:  
If my eyes were black as well, O water  
I should set the whole round world afire  
Both the married and unmarried people  
Most of all those who are newly married!



And the bachelors wore out their girdles  
Pulled them tight to make their waists look slimmer  
Married men left wives and little children  
Widowers tugged out their fine moustaches  
The betrothed returned their rings, O water  
And the old men shaved off all their beards."

Veles, Sbornik X 35.

Lalka dear, listen pretty one!  
And dont come walking past our house  
And do not clatter with your shoes  
Upon the pavement of our yard  
To tease the watchdog on his chain  
And plague the boy. Though he's betrothed  
In the next village to a girl  
Whose people are so very grand  
It's Lalka he is wild about.  
On Saturday he goes to dance  
On Sunday morning goes to plough  
And all the morning ploughs and sings  
Is crazy all the afternoon  
Waiting to see the sun go down  
So he can pass by Lalka's house  
To get a chance of seeing her  
And hear her sing. What was't she sang?  
„O mother if girls only knew:  
If they but knew they wouldnt wed



For like a hollyhock in bloom  
The girl is in her mother's house;  
And like the fennel in the field  
The young bride fades with her „in laws“  
Father in law, mother in law  
Sisters in law married or no  
And all her husbands brothers too  
And most of all from her first love.“

Koprivchitsa, Sbornik XIV 14.

**M**other dear, do you, remember  
In the brave days e'er I married  
What handsome clothing I wore then  
What a sleek horse twas I rode then  
With a long gun on my shoulder  
Two pistols stuck in my girdle?  
O if you only knew, mother!  
As I passed by on the roadway  
How all the girls would be looking,  
How they would say to each other  
„Lucky the girl that he marries!“  
And the brides said to each other  
„Lucky his wife when he's married!“  
How the old women would stare too  
How they said one to another  
„Happy the mother that bore him!“  
Bachelor life is a pasha's



Like a vizier is a spinster.  
But since I'm plighted and married  
My horse has forgotten his neighing  
And my long rifle is rusty  
And my fine clothes worn to pieces.  
Bachelor life is a pasha's!

s. I. Karaveloff, Pamiatniki I 222.

Sava son, why does the Pasha threaten  
Wheresoe'er he finds you he will kill you?  
„Well my mother, well my dear old mother  
Tis no wonder that he wants to kill me.  
Last night I was coming from the tavern  
Starting home; a girl came from the hot baths  
And we met there in the narrow alley.  
Now God smite the button of my gaiter!  
It entangled in the lass'es trousers.  
As I stooped down to undo the button  
May God smite the button, of my waistcoat!  
It entangled in the lass'es necklace  
And it broke the necklace and the pearls fell.  
As I stooped to gather all the pearls up  
And the yellow florins that were scattered  
May God smite my tiresome moustaches!  
They entangled in the lass'es side curls.  
That is why of course the Pasha threatens  
He will kill me wheresoe'er he finds me“.

Miladinoff no 440







Yanka is such a pretty lass.  
Yanka was standing at the gate  
And saw the Cadi passing by  
Behind him came his officers  
Leading a young man prisoner  
His white hands fast behind his back  
With heavy fetters. Yanka said  
„Why do you take him prisoner?“  
„O Yanka, O you pretty lass  
Because the fellow kissed a girl.“  
„O Cadi, wise old gentleman  
Let youth become a law to you:  
Whenever two old people meet  
Cross looks are all that they exchange  
Whenever two young people meet  
What is it you would have them do?“

quoted by Pencho Slaveikoff, *Periodichisko Spisania* 1902 LXII 15

My horse, bay beauty of a horse  
Lift your head higher as we go  
And drop into a gentle trot  
For we must go, my little horse  
Right through the streets of Pashmakli  
Past the townhall of Raikovo  
Through Oostok market on our way.  
When we near Lower Raikovo



Step higher as you trot along  
And raise your head again and neigh  
Strike out a bit and paw the ground.  
My sweetheart lives in Raikovo  
Wooed and not won, loved, not yet mine.  
Perhaps, my horse, she may come out  
To the bay window up above  
Upon the many-coloured seat  
Behind the screen of turner's work  
And see us both as we pass by.  
Then I will feed you, little horse  
On the white wheat of Fidabey  
And give you Island wine to drink.

Akhur Chelebisko, Sbornik I 33

Townhall for *konak* the residence of the pasha, which has now lost its meaning.

Island wine from the Archipelago is brought back to this district by the tailors and clothmerchants who trade with the islands.

Musharabi seems an unknown word, the text has „close woven cages“ but in old Bulgarian houses the windows, especially the bow windows, are often screened with prettily turned woodwork gratings. Among the Pomaks, who are Mohammedan, these are probably still more frequent.

„**F**riend and kinsman Ivan!  
Do not watch the lassie  
At the dance on Sunday  
In her clean white clothing  
With her hair fine plaited;



For her mother washed her  
Snow white shift, her sister  
Combed her hair and plaited.  
Go and watch the lassie  
See about her reaping  
See what sheaves she binds there  
Does she lead the reapers?  
Is she in the middle  
Does she drag behind them?"  
So Ivan decided  
He would pasture cattle  
Just to get a chance to  
See the lassie working  
See about her reaping  
See about her binding.  
And Ivan soon found her  
Where the shade was thickest  
But she was not reaping  
And she was not binding  
There she sat attending  
To her brother's baby  
With her foot she rocked him  
Singing „Go to sleep dear  
So Mamma can reap a  
Double row, my darling  
One of them for Mummy  
One of them for Aunty."

1872, Sbornik XXVI 416



**W**e are starting early, early in the morning  
Through the wood to seek a bride in the next village  
But you listen sonny, what I'm going to tell you  
Mind now, when you enter in the lasses courtyard  
Do not notice if the house is big or little  
Just look out and see boy, what about the sweeping.  
Do not pay attention to the lasses clothing  
To her sleeve embroideries, necklaces and earrings  
All the whole collection costs but a few shillings.\*  
But take heed and find out if she has a memory  
That is worth a fortune and is never finished.

Miladinoff no 328

\* Literally „Grosh“ twopences. In his moral fervour he grossly underestimates the value of a peasant dress. With all its belongings it easily costs £ 5. and is of very lasting materials, thick felted serge, hempen linen embroidered in fine wools that keep their colour wonderfully under the fierce sunlight.

**G**raziers from Vratsa are travelling  
Saying the one to the other  
„Where shall we seek a night's lodging?  
What squire's house shall we visit  
That he may feed us and lodge us?“  
Peter the grazier said „Graziers  
Follow me on to poor Lalo's  
If he is poor, his wife's courteous  
And with kind words she will feed us



Give us to drink with good manners.  
She has two pretty young daughters  
They will attend us, stand by us.\*  
So they rode on to poor Lalo's  
Knocked, out came Rada and opened  
Neda led off all the horses  
Taking them into the stable  
Giving them hay and green basil.\*  
Into the house Rada led them  
Setting them pillows to sit on  
Took off their boots, washed their feet too  
Dried with a soft cotton towel.\*  
Then a hot supper\* was ready  
Plenty to eat and to drink too.  
At morning when they were starting  
And pretty Rada came with them  
Opening the gates, Petko told her  
„Get ready Rada, I'm coming  
Saturday next for our wedding“.  
Rada said „Petko, young grazier  
Do not make fun of me, Petko  
We are poor people and simple.“

\* Stand attention, „divan“, is a mark of honour to distinguished guests or older people.

\* The basil is a poetic exaggeration, it is not a forage crop but a garden herb brought in here to show the good quality of the hay.

\* The towel must have been very soft and fine, it was of the stuff used for turbans.

\* The hot supper also was a mark of special consideration, for normally cooking was only done once a day and then for midday dinner.



Petko said „Rada, fair Rada  
I am not looking for money  
Rada, I'm looking for beauty  
But most for courtesy, Rada  
And for good sense, understanding;  
You cannot buy them with money.“

Elena, Karaveloff Transactions no 66

Gladly would I stay here with you drinking,  
Wine or mead would both of them be welcome  
But my horse is really most unruly.  
When I ride him in the level highways  
He will never stay upon the highways,  
Turns aside to every lassie's gateway.  
And he only gets me into trouble  
For I have not money for tobacco  
Let alone to pay for any wedding;  
I have not a shirt to bless myself with  
Let alone for godfathers\* for presents,  
Nor a towel fit to wipe my face on  
Let alone to give it to the best man.

Sbornik XIV 18

\* The „Koom“ and his feminine partner the „Koomitsa“  
preside at the wedding and later at the christening of the chil-  
dren. Presents are given by the young couple, especially the  
bride, as well as to them.



The golden apple branches swayed  
And struck the young King's shoulder.  
The bellman called about the town  
The town of Ichtiman, O:  
„Heigh! All that have fine clothes to wear  
Just put them on and wear them.  
The man that has a horse to ride  
Had better mount and ride it  
Whoever has a pretty love  
Let him make love and win her  
For years may come and years may change  
And you be left regretting!“

Pirot, Sbornik X 45

Did you really love me as I love you  
You would not be waiting for the full moon  
For the moon is only meant for travellers.  
Better are dark nights for two young lovers  
Two young lovers such as you and me, love  
Youth, my lover, does not last for ages  
Youth flows by as if it were a river;  
Tis old age my boy that last for ages.  
And the moon is only meant for travellers  
Better are dark nights for two young lovers  
Two young lovers such as you and me love.

Okhrida, Sbornik V 96



O my little soul, my Yanna  
Either love and love in earnest  
Or else say you will not have me  
Then I neednt prowl of evenings  
Set the village dogs abarking.  
All the village has been saying  
„Who is this that goes at nightfall  
Round the village? Is't a vampire  
Or some young blood?“ Yanna's brothers  
Said „O villagers of Metovo  
Tis no vampire, a young fellow  
Yanna's sweetheart.“ But they answered  
„Goodness gracious Yanna's brothers!  
If it's only Yanna's sweetheart  
Then accept him or else kill him.  
Let's have peace here in our village!“

Slaveikoff Period. Spis, LXII 17

Girl, there's one thing I shall ask you  
Do not lead me on but take me  
Do not drive me crazy waiting  
Hanging round your house at nighttime.  
All who know me think me crazy  
Take me for a wolf at midnight  
While I slink beneath the house eaves  
With the gutters dripping on me.

Miladinoff no 446



Stoyan said „Rada, Rada dear  
What is this love of yours and mine?  
A love you never can forget.  
When I sit down to eat my bread  
The morsel sticks there in my throat  
I have to leave the table, dear  
To get a drink to wash it down.  
And when I took the buffalos  
And went out to the field to work  
Still I kept wondering as I walked  
Whether we really shall wed  
And deep in thought I missed the way  
And came to your field not to ours  
And ploughed your field till dinner time  
And when I looked what I had ploughed  
It wasnt our field all the time  
But yours. And then I prayed to God  
The plough might break and I be forced  
To come back in the dinner hour  
So I might have to pass your house  
And see you Rada, in the yard.“

Bessarabia, Yankoff p 152



**L**ast night from the fields I came  
From my digging, from the plough  
Muddy, wet and tired out.  
Through the village as I went  
(Though 'twas not the shortest way)  
In your yard I saw you work  
Planting out your basil plants  
And I asked a sprig of you.  
But no basil would you give,  
Plucked a nettle in its stead  
Would not lay it in my hand  
Threw it out across the hedge  
And it fell into my breast,  
Burned me, set me all afire.

Bolgrad, Yankoff no 160

**T**here was a maiden  
Planted a vineyard  
Down by the seashore.  
One day she planted,  
Two days she hoed it;  
And as she planted.  
And as she hoed it  
Still she was weeping  
Weeping and singing :  
„O vineyard, vineyard  
Full of white muscats



Now that I plant you  
Say, who will gather?  
When I have noone  
Father nor mother  
Sister nor brother  
No one is left me  
Save God Almighty  
God and my lover.  
God's high above us  
In the blue heaven  
My love's afar off  
Out on the Black Sea."

Teteven, Sbornik XXXI 207

Ivancho said to Irene  
„Give me your hand, dear Irene  
Bid me goodbye and forgive me.  
We have been lovers, Irene  
Twas a mistake, and a great one.  
Now I am going to Sliven  
Mother arranged my betrothal  
And I am going to marry  
A Sliven girl, fair and rosy  
Slim as a wand in the garden."  
„Ivancho dear" said Irene  
„Now that your mother betrothes you  
Marries you down there in Sliven



What has become of our talking,  
All the sweet things we were saying?  
Do you remember? Remember  
How it began dear, between us?  
Standing one day in your garden  
Under the shade of the cherry  
When we were picking the cherries  
Dropping them into my apron  
Before we finished the cherries  
We were in love with each other  
And I had promised, Ivancho  
If Mother would not allow it  
I would run off to the forest  
Live with you there in the shadows  
Feeding your flocks in the forest.  
Tell me Ivancho, Ivancho  
What has become of the promise?  
Say did the torrent come rushing  
Carrying the words away with it?  
Did the breeze blow them away dear?  
I will forgive you, God will not“.

Koprivchitsa, Sbornik XVI—XVII 81

Another version from the same district runs  
„Brave words we spoke in the twilight  
Down at the back of the sergemill  
As we leant over the water.  
Did they float off with the water?  
Sink in the sand at the bottom?“



Three long yearš now, Kata, I have lain here  
Yet you never came to see me, Kata  
God be praised that he has brought you, Kata.  
Turn the pillow, Kata, towards the window  
Let me see the lake and watch the water,  
Let me see the waves lap on the foreshore.  
As the waves beat, Kata, so my heart beats.

Okhrida, Cheshmedjieff no 3

„Stoina, be merry, be merry!  
Why are you merry no longer  
As in your first year of marriage?“  
Stoina said „Uncle, how can I?  
Last night I went to a wedding  
Carrying a torch brightly burning  
I looked at all in their order  
Mine was the ugliest husband.“  
Still he said „Stoina, be merry!  
Ugly he is — that is certain,  
Only remember he's wealthy.“  
„Wealth, uncle, wealth: and what is it?  
Only a rotten manureheap!“  
Gently her uncle said „Stoina  
My wife is even more ugly.  
Stoina, be merry, be merry:  
Dont be depressed, my niece Stoina!“

Trun 1879, Kachanovski no 77



See the moon is shining brightly  
Let us hope it goes on shining  
Till I reach home, all my way home  
To my wife and to the baby.  
When I came the door was fastened  
She had long since had her supper  
Gone to bed and was asleep now  
And although I wished to wake her  
I was glad she should be sleeping.  
So I leaped into the garden  
And I picked a bunch of basil  
Dipping it in the clear water  
Came into the room and splashed her  
On her fair face as she lay there.  
And a breeze blew from the mountain  
Stirred the covers as she lay there  
„Do not blow, o breeze, to wake her:  
I myself would rather wake her.“

Miladinoff № 590, Shapkaroff № 95 & Sbornik VI 13

„Come, mother, come, forget me now  
Forget me now and cease to mourn.“  
„I will forget, nor mourn my son  
See from the fire I take this brand  
And set it in the earth to grow  
And when it roots, becomes a tree



Your mother sits there in the shade  
Yes, then I will forget you dear,  
Forget you then and cease to mourn."  
„Come father, come, forget me now  
Forget me now and cease to mourn."  
„I will forget, nor mourn my son  
When the white Danube has run dry  
And turned into a fair green field.  
Your father then will take his scythe  
And cut the fine thick hay in swathes  
And play upon his shepherd's pipe  
Forget you dear, and cease to mourn."

Mustafa Pasha, Sbornik 1909 58

**M**other took me out once  
With her gathering nettles  
But hoarfrost had fallen  
Spoiling all the nettles  
O my goodness gracious!  
Sure I shall be beaten.

Mother took me out once  
With her gathering mushrooms  
But no rain had fallen  
So I found one mushroom  
And I lost the basket  
O my goodness gracious!  
Sure I shall be beaten.



Mother took me out once  
And for snails we hunted  
But no dew had fallen  
Not a snail would venture  
O my goodness gracious!  
Sure I shall be beaten.

Yankoff no 137

**M**other and daughter have quarrelled —  
If it had been for a reason!  
Over the shirt for the bridegroom\*  
That it had not been spun finely.  
Mother said „Go away daughter  
Long enough you have upset us  
Turning the house upside down here!“  
„I'm going mother, I'm going,  
I'm here today but tomorrow  
Tomorrow now, just about noontime  
Do I not wish I could see you!  
Father will come home from fieldwork  
Who will unfasten the oxen?  
You will begin to unyoke them  
You will be thinking about me  
Daughter wherever you be now  
Come and unyoke me the oxen!  
Then you'll be sweeping the house out  
You will be thinking about me



Daughter wherever you be now  
Come here and sweep me the house out!  
Brother will come from the forest  
You will remember me saying  
Why dont you go out to meet him?"

Wedding song Seres, Verkovich no 212

\* See note p. 40.

Once there was a woman  
Had a horse, a daughter  
Lent the horse on hire  
And betrothed the daughter  
Sold it altogether  
And the girl was married;  
Sat her down weeping  
In her little garden  
Underneath the olive  
„Oh my horse, my daughter  
Helpmate, my Dragana  
Like a jug of water  
Early in the morning  
Brought into the garden  
Covered with a towel.  
Dear why did you leave me  
Leave me to my son's wife?  
She's to me a helpmate  
Like a jug of water



Drawn at early morning  
And brought in at midday  
To a stuffy chamber  
Stuck among the pillows  
Covered with a blanket  
Served with bitter nagging."

Teteven, Sbornik XXXI p 217

Down from the hill came  
Two girls from Zagora  
And one was crying  
The other consoled her  
„Give over crying!  
Is't for your lover?  
One finds a lover  
On the road, under it,  
By the cool fountain.  
A brother one finds not  
On the road under it  
Nor at the fountain."

Yankoff no 130



Roina sat down on her bedstead  
 Swang her feet under the bedstead  
 Praying „God grant me at Easter  
 When I go round to see Aunty  
 That she may give me a new dress  
 Ready with shift, belt and kerchief  
 White stockings, new yellow slippers  
 Then I can go to the dancing.“  
 Easter came, Roina went calling  
 Went to her Aunt and said „Aunty  
 Give me a shift and a new dress  
 Kerchief and belt and white stockings  
 Slippers to dance in the horo.“\*  
 Seeing her aunt pick the yoke up  
 Into the street Roina hurried.  
 „Get out of this, shameless hussy!  
 Why dont you spin them and weave them?“  
 „Didnt I spin and weave, Aunty?  
 Spread it to bleach on the hedgetop  
 Uncle's calf came up and tugged it  
 Down it fell on him and killed him  
 And Uncle took off my linen  
 Just to make up for the damage.“

Gabrovo, Sbornik XV 27

\* A round dance, a great cirde in which all join taking hands.  
 Of course the excuse is an impudent lie. The calf really belonged to her aunt by marriage on the father's side and she is talking to her maternal aunt, but as we have nothing like the wealth of names for relationship to be found in Bulgarian, to avoid confusion I venture to assume that the uncle was alive and had a share in the calf.



At Neda's head two pigeons flutter  
And at her feet there are three peacocks.  
Pigeons and peacocks say to Neda  
„Go home, go home now sister Neda  
Go home, believe me, for there are waiting  
Two flasks of wine, three invitations.“  
Then Neda said „O Aunt Todora  
I cant decide which one to marry  
Which shall I take, Ivan or Stoyan?“  
„Dont take Ivan, for he's a tailor  
When he gets up he takes his yardstick  
Goes to the village, sits in the houses  
Sits in the houses cutting out jackets  
Cutting out jackets, stares at the women.  
At evening he comes, cross and worried  
Says not a word and wants no talking.  
Stoyans a shepherd; at early morning  
He takes his stick, goes to the mountain  
And snow blows round him and rain falls on him  
And as he leads his flock to pasture  
He waves his crook and gathers nosegays.  
At night he comes back wet and muddy  
He says his say, likes to be talking  
„Here lass, some flowers from the mountain  
Iris and pansies, I picked them for you.“

Bourgaz, Sbornik IV 16



Deli Boi, Kara Boi  
Ran away into Roumania  
Bred sheep there and had three dogs too  
Karamancha, Balabancha  
And Greybitch. Some Turks were passing  
Three Turks out of Anatolia  
And they caught poor Deli Boi  
Caught poor Deli Boi and bound him  
And began to share his flock out  
And divide it in three portions.  
Deli Boi said „Anatolians  
If you just untie my right hand  
I will play my pipe to help you  
Play the tune that leads the flock home.“  
But he did not play the music  
That would start the flock off homewards  
For he played to call his dogs up.  
Up they all came, growling, snarling  
„Karamancha, Balabancha  
Up at them and tear their throats out!  
Dig their graves my bonny Greybitch!“

s. l. 1859, Rakovsky p 141



**R**ada, Rada, Demeriova  
Dont you marry any farmer  
For a weary life is farming  
All day long you're out at fieldwork  
Milking cows or doing cooking.  
From the fields he comes at evening  
Soaking to the knees and muddy  
And you call him in to supper.  
„Rada, Rada Demeriova  
Tell me, have you washed my puttees?  
See the oxgoad on my shoulder  
And the hatchet in my girdle  
And take care or I shall beat you.“  
You had better wed a grocer  
Life is easy with a grocer  
Late he comes home from his business  
Brings you loaves hot from the bakehouse  
Loaves all hot and trout for supper  
Trout for supper, wine a jugfull  
He will eat and you eat with him  
He will drink and you drink with him.  
Yankoff no 197 .



Easter and Holy Week's come now  
Girls are all dancing the horo\*  
And the boys putting the stone now  
Each takes his turn but when Stoyan  
Came to take his turn and put it  
Up from below came his uncle  
Saying „Stoyan, I dont hire you  
Just for to dance with the lasses  
And put the stone with the lads here.  
It was for ploughing I hired you  
So you can plough, though it's Easter.“  
Stoyan was grieved and affronted  
Shamed too in front of the others  
He went straight home from the dancing  
Threw off his clothes, put on others  
Harnessed the buffaloes, started.  
He traced one furrow, another  
And then the buffaloes halted.  
Stoyan said „Come, draw the plough on  
Bother this tiresome ploughing!“  
But they both bellowed „Stoyaně“  
Master just look in the furrow.“  
And when he looked in the furrow  
There was a pot of gold pieces.  
He went straight back and gave notice  
That he was leaving his uncle  
And came away to his mother  
Bringing the pot of gold pieces.

Belogradchik, Marinoff III 359

\* See note to p. 70.



**W**hen the harvest came the girl had got a fever  
When the corn was in and everyone was feasting,  
Everyone was feasting, then the girl was better,  
Yes the girl was better, came and joined the dancing.  
Looking towards the fields she saw the millet yellow  
Turning to her mother suddenly she murmured  
„Mother dearest mother! have my bed made ready  
For that summer fever has again attacked me.“  
Once the millet garnered, then the girl felt better.

Yankoff no 265

**E**nd o'the row come nearer .  
Be a brother to me  
Come a little nearer  
At the end awaits me  
Shadow of a walnut  
Water from the well head  
There one can sit down too  
Sit down and get cooler  
Have a drink of water  
And get up one's forces  
To go on a reaping.

Altimir, Sbornik XVIII 146



Dobranka to the garden went  
She entered by the little gate  
Before her stood an olivetree  
Beneath the tree a tailor sat  
And sewed a scarlet petticoat  
And as he sat and sewed he said  
„Just see how fine my dresses are  
And all their skirts are very wide  
And they are gathered at the waist  
And in the back there are two seams.“

Razgrad, Sbornik VII 20

Yanna, Angelina  
Red as rowanberry  
Sweet as purple lilac!  
Go and tell your mother  
To come out and see me  
Standing on the doorstep  
For I want to ask her  
Just one little question:  
Would a basketmaker  
Meet with her approval  
As a son-in-law, pray?  
I would weave her baskets  
She can search the woods for  
Blackberries to fill them,



Make them into brandy,  
Dearly she can sell it,  
Farthing for a drop  
A thousand for a glassfull.

Yankoff no 304

**M**ara was sifting white flour for baking  
And as she sifted Mara was praying  
„O dear God let me marry a deacon  
Or let him have a priest for his father  
Or for his mother an old priest's widow  
I am so fond of sweeping the church out.!”

Belogradchik, Mladenoff no 585

„**B**lack nun, O tell me now for whom you wear  
That fair pale visage?”  
„I wear it, O young man, for the black earth  
White mould and mildew.”  
„Give it to me, black nun, give it to me  
I shall be grateful  
Give it to me, black nun, for the black earth  
Will not say thankyou.”  
„Black nun, O tell me now for whom you wear  
Those coalblack eyes then?”



„I wear them, O, young man, for the black earth  
White mould and mildew.“

„Give them to me, black nun, give them to me  
I shall be grateful

Give them to me, black nun, for the black earth  
Will not say thankyou.“

And so with „Those coalblack eyebrows“  
„That snow white bosom“

Koprishtitsa, Karaveloff, Transactions no 52

There is a sedianka\*  
Ma wont let me go there  
„Come now, lay the supper  
Clear away and sweep up  
Make the beds and lie down.“  
And I made them, lay down  
Staid till all were sleeping  
Looked across the hedgetop  
All the girls had gathered  
And the boys beside them  
And my sweetheart there too  
But he was not sitting  
He was standing, leaning  
On his Shepherd's crook there  
And the girls were saying  
„Sit down lad, sit down now  
Take another sweetheart!“

1859 s. 1. G. Rakovsky, Pokazalets 18

\* Evening working party.



Mother bade me and forbade me  
To go drinking wine of evenings  
In the mornings to drink brandy.  
Silly I! I did not listen  
Drank, and drunk set out on horseback  
On my wrist I took my falcon  
Rode among the rich folk's houses  
Boxwood gates stood at the corner  
By the gates a little lassie  
And I said Good evening to her  
And she answered „Come tomorrow  
Leave your horse and hawk behind you.“  
Silly I! I did not listen,  
Drank, and drunk I got on horse back  
On my wrist I took my falcon  
Rode among the rich folk's houses  
Reached the gateway at the corner  
But the boxwood gates were bolted  
Then I stood there and I wondered  
Whether I should smash the gates or  
Leap the wall into the garden.  
Clapped the mare's flanks with the stirrups  
Leapt the wall into the garden  
Threw my coat upon a peartree  
Loosed the hawk in the carnations  
Tied the mare up to the rosetree.  
And I climbed into the loggia  
Where the little lass lay sleeping  
At her head an inlaid table



On the table stood a beaker  
In the beaker clear cold water  
In the water was a nosegay.  
So I stood and hesitated  
Whether I should drink the water  
Take the nosegay, kiss the lassie.  
For the water lasts you two hours  
And the, nosegay lasts till noontide  
But the love will last for ever.

Vratza, Sbornik XXII 117

„Listen, pretty blackeyed lassie!  
Black as sloes your pretty eyes are  
Round and full like grapes at vintage.  
There is something I must ask you  
You must answer me sincerely  
Who is it has made you angry  
Angry, surly? Father, mother?“  
„No young fellow, I'm not angry  
With my father, with my mother,  
Nor my brothers. You're the sinner.  
Such a long way you have travelled  
In the heights and in the mountains  
With the Anatolian army  
From the place where the sun rises  
Right to where it sets at nightfall;  
Was there not one flower you found there  
You could pluck me, you could bring me?



Then I'd say 'I have a lover  
 Tis his nosegay I am wearing."  
 „Lass, I found an early blossom  
 To my horse's mane it reached up  
 And I bent to pluck it, bring it  
 But the flower said Young fellow  
 If you pluck and take me with you  
 Do not give me to the lasses  
 For the lasses treat me badly.  
 All day on their heads they wear me  
 On their heads beneath their kerchiefs.  
 When they come home in the evening  
 Off they take me, down they throw me.  
 When they get up in the morning  
 In the morning on a Monday  
 Picking up the brush and shovel  
 Quick they sweep me up and take me  
 Throw me out upon the rubbish  
 Where the hens will pick me over.  
 Tis the children wear me nicely  
 All day on their heads they wear me  
 Twixt their eyes, upon the forehead.  
 When they come home in the evening  
 Then they take me off and lay me  
 On the eaves and all the night long  
 Breezes blow on me to cool me  
 And the dew falls to refresh me."

Miladinoff no 387

In this song which is widespread, it is generally the lads,  
 not the children who are represented as careful of posies, trea-  
 suring them no doubt as love tokens or as scalps as the case may be.



Ever since I grew a gay young bachelor  
I had not gone down the little back alley.  
All the little alley smelt of Sweet Basil  
And it smelt beside of red and white roses.  
From the North-East came fresh breezes ablowing  
And they blew the gate of a garden open.  
In the garden were red hollyhocks growing  
Underneath the hollyhocks was a grassplot  
On the grass was spread a silken prayer-carpet  
On the carpet lay a soft velvet cushion  
On the cushion there a sick man was lying  
At his head two little lasses were sitting.

Veles, Sbornik X 37

„Little girl, cunning and clever  
Pray do not pass through my courtyard  
And do not rattle your buckets  
You'll only give me fresh troubles  
Troubles and bothersome worries.  
Have I so few of my own, pray?  
That I should take yours upon me?“  
„Dear, do you want me to teach you?  
Take them, my dear and collect them  
Put them all in a silk pocket  
And at St Georges\*, the great day  
Lead out a fine pair of oxen  
Plough up your father's back garden



Sow all the troubles and worries  
Sow yours and mine love together.  
Then if it's columbine sprouts, dear  
Certainly we shall be lovers  
If it is nettles, we part dear  
If it is basil we marry."  
Never a columbine sprouted  
Nor yet a nettle, but basil  
And so the two of them married  
For they were very well suited  
Just like two sprays of a cowslip.

Doopnitsa, Angeloff and Arnaoudoff p 54

\* St George, patron saint of Bulgaria as well as of England  
has his feastday on May 6 (O. S. April 23).

**S**toyanë, heigh Stoyanë!  
Stoyan has set up a fountain  
And round the fountain an orchard  
And in the orchard are flowers  
Herbs too, sweet basil and parsley  
And all who came to fetch water  
Gathered a nosegay to smell at  
Last of them all slender Neda;  
But though she poured herself water  
She did not gather a nosegay.  
Stoyan called to her „Fair Neda  
Now you have poured yourself water  
Why dont you gather a nosegay?“  
„Stoyan, dont call up my troubles



Troubles, black, bitter as worm wood  
How have I heart for a nosegay?  
Yesterday down by the river  
As my new shirt I was bleaching  
I lost my sleeve." Stoyan answered  
„Neda so pretty and slender  
Do not wilt, lassie and wither :  
I have your sleeve and I keep it  
All the day long in my bosom  
All the night under my pillow."  
„Keep it, take care of it Stoyan  
It took a year in the working  
And half a year in the making."  
Demir Hissar, Sbornik IV 30

**Y**anka was sitting down by the gateway  
The little gateway under the white vine  
Under the mulberry in the deep shadow  
On the green grass, beside the cool water  
Twisting her threads and threading her coins  
Setting her stitches, letting the tears fall.  
„O stitches, stitches! for whom do I sew you?  
Is't for an old man or for a young man?  
If it's an old man I shall unpick you  
If it's a young man I'll set more stitches."  
Then there passed by a gay young fellow  
Tossed her an apple, a golden apple.  
On her white breast it hit fair Yanka  
On her white breast her white hands caught it.  
Okhrida, Shapkareff no 155



Pretty Dimka's bleaching linen  
Bleaching and her feet she's washing  
At the river by the willow.  
Up the valley come some carters  
Quite a caravan of carters  
And they call aloud to Dimka  
„Dimka lass, you're bleaching linen  
Wont you give to us some linen  
Just enough to make a shirt of  
A fine shirt with white skirts to it  
White skirts reaching to the ankles?“  
Dimka answered „O you carters  
This is for my wedding presents  
Presents for the groom's relations  
And whoever marries Dimka  
He it is will get the linen.“

Koprishtitsa, Karaveloff Transac no 53

Shirts have to be long to allow for pouching over the belt. The recess formed is an indispensable pocket. They specify that the skirts are to be bleached also because the unexposed parts of shirts are generally made of coarser material.

Two girls once struck up a friendship  
Where they went, they went together  
On one frame they both embroidered  
And one dress they made together  
In one box they safely stored it



And they said „Let's both get married  
And live in one house together  
And be married to two brothers!“  
So it happened, both were married  
And both married in the same house  
And were married to two brothers.

Miladinovi 406

**H**ad I but known it that I must wed you  
Bending me double I would have leaped down  
Into the muddy waters of Siber  
Two days and three nights they would have borne me  
They would have thrown me on the King's meadow.  
From my slim body there would have sprouted  
A slender poplar, and the King's soldiers  
Could stand beneath it. Where my gold hair caught  
Green grass would shoot up and the King's stallions  
Would pasture on it.  
From my black eyes gush two clear cold fountains  
For the King's soldiers to drink the water  
And my white breasts be two small hillocks  
And the King's soldiers would camp upon them

Orekhovitza 1872, Sbornik XXVI 208



**T**here's a heavy dew been falling  
In our godfather's smooth courtyards  
And the fine green grass is sprouting  
And the peacock feeds upon it.  
How his tail-feathers are falling!  
Godmother\* picks up the feathers  
Weaves two crowns to serve at weddings  
She will marry two young people.

Plovdiv, Sbornik X 57

\* See note p. 57.

**I**n the wood a bird is singing  
And like this the wood rechoes:  
„If you have a son to marry  
Better hurry up the wedding  
While the girls are not expensive-  
For a time of dearth is coming  
When a dark girl costs a thousand  
And a fair face costs two thousand  
And a warm heart costs three thousand.  
But the boys are very cheap now  
And a warm heart can be purchased  
For a truss of straw, they tell me.  
If the straw were only decent!  
But tis rye-straw, nothing better.  
And a blackeyed boy is worth a



Truss of hay, and what poor hay too !  
Marsh grass you might almost call it.  
And a fairfaced boy is worth a  
Truss of weeds, what wretched weeds too !  
Grandma threw them on the rubbish  
And the hens have picked them over."

Trun, Sbornik XXII 28

THE COVER IS DESIGNED BY B. ANGELUSHEFF

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